**Session 8: What Every Teacher Should Know about Comprehension** **Read the following articles and questions, and post your responses to the discussion board.**

Comprehending is a complicated process, as we have discovered and explored in this article. Yet it is one of the most important skills for students to develop if they are to become successful and productive adults. Comprehension instruction in schools, beginning in kindergarten, is therefore crucial. Discuss how comprehension works.

1. Identify how to get the reader to engage in some form of text.

*Engaging students in text begins with activating background knowledge and setting a clear and authentic purpose for reading. Students need to understand their reason for reading, what is expected to take place during reading, and what will be expected of them after reading. The activities that take place after reading should be a meaningful extension of the text and should foster a deeper understanding of and connection to the text.*

2. Discuss the importance of teachers learning how to support readers.

*Teachers of all grades need to provide the appropriate reading support to their students. If students do not receive the support they need, they will struggle to comprehend and make sense of the text. Once this happens, even just a few times, a child will become frustrated and give up. There are many ways teachers can provide support to their students. They can explicitly model and practice comprehension strategies with their students. Class discussions related to readings can become an integral part of their daily routine. Teachers can teach text structures to their students and show them how to use the structure to aide their comprehension. Finally, they can encourage and support their students by helping them to choose appropriate texts for themselves and by allowing time to read independently and to talk about what they are reading.*   
  
3. How do you think you can build and activate prior knowledge?

*The key to building background knowledge is enveloping children is an environment that encourages learning at all times. Some of our students come from this type of home environment. Sadly, many do not. Classrooms like this are filled with books of all types. Children are read to daily and conversations are encouraged. Current events are discussed and shared. Connections are made between new texts and old. Students are encouraged to share their life experiences and what they learned from them. The activation of background knowledge is equally important. If you want a student to make connections and ask questions related to text, you must first provide them with a bit of a foundation to build those connections on. Teachers can find creative ways to activate background knowledge and get their students excited about and interested in what they are about to read: class discussion, picture books, book excerpts, pictures, videos, poems, word lists, etc. I find that, often times, students have background knowledge and don’t even know it. Once the activation begins, things pop into their minds that they never would have brought forward if not encouraged to do so.*

4. How do you think you can motivate students to read?

*There are many ways to motivate students to read. If possible, allowing students to choose their text is a very good way to motivate them because they will choose something of interest to them. Interest surveys are a way to gauge the common interests a class might share. Activating background knowledge in a creative and interesting way is also a motivator. Sometimes, however, text choice is not an option and students have to read text that simply is not of interest to them. In these cases, it is important for teachers to provide a clear and authentic purpose, adequate support, and meaningful follow-up activities. Whenever possible, connections should be made between their reading and the real world. They should be given opportunities to discuss their thoughts and ideas related to their reading. Essentially, we need to make reading relevant and meaningful for them. When reading becomes monotonous and connected to mundane busy work, students resent it.*

5. How do you think you can engage students in personal responses to text?

*If we want our students to think critically and make connections connected to their reading then we need to provide opportunities for them to share their thoughts. Class discussions, Literature Circles, Book Clubs, and projects are excellent ways to engage students in personal responses to text. The element of choice can be important in this area also. Allowing one student to write a diary while another creates a picture encourages students to share their personal responses in their own way.*

6. How do you think you can understand the importance of teaching text structures?

*Teaching text structure, particularly in the content areas, is very important. In conjunction with this, students should be taught how to take notes and how the use of graphic organizers can be helpful. If a student understands that the structure is main idea/detail or compare/contrast, they can begin to get their brain ready to make sense of the new information in that way. Since content area text books offer a variety of structures, a solid understanding of each is important. Knowing the structure of narrative text allows students to respond to events and predict what is to come.*

7. How will you create visible reading/writing connections?

*The interdependent relationship between reading and writing is something that must be reinforced daily. Making sense of something we have written is equally as important as making sense of something we have read. Students should be writing daily, even if only a short prompt. When possible, that prompt should be related to something they have read. Students must be given support with their writing just as they do for the reading. It is important that all students, at one time or another, be encouraged to share. When asked to share, I require students to share what they have written, verbatim. This encourages them to pause and think carefully about what they want to say and how best to say it. Very quickly, students learn to take care with their writing because they want to present their ideas in a way that makes sense to the listener.*